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TITLE: Changing Epidemiology of Primary and Secondary Syphilis in Chicago-Emergence of The Impact of Men who have Sex with Men

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: The intersection between syphilis and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) has been well characterized. In 1997, Chicago reported the 2nd highest number of primary and secondary (P&S) syphilis cases in the United States. We compared the demographics of P&S cases reported in 1998 to those reported in 1997. To further characterize the 1998 cases, we also analyzed available syphilis interview records for the 1998 cases.

METHODS: Abstraction and analysis of STD surveillance data and syphilis interview records.

RESULTS: In 1997, 346 cases of P&S syphilis were reported in Chicago. Of these, 201 (58.1%) were male and 145 (41.9%) female, 10 (2.9%) were White, 305 (88.1%) Black, 12 (3.5%) Hispanic, and the median age were 32 years. In contrast, of the 338 cases reported in 1998, 203 (60.1%) were male, 135 (39.9%) female, 25 (7.4%) were White, 266 (78.7%) Black, 9 (2.7%) Hispanic, and the median age were 34 years. Syphilis interview data was available for 237 (70%) of the 1998 P&S cases. Of the 133 men for whom interview data was available, 41 (30.8%) reported sex with men (MSM), including 17 (77.2%) of 22 white men and 21 (9.6%) of the 107 black men. The age range of the MSM cases was 21-51 years, with a median of 34 years. Twenty-six (63%) of the cases among MSM were from 9 (11.6%) of Chicago's 77 community areas.

CONCLUSIONS: In 1998, MSM emerged as an important factor for syphilis transmission in Chicago, changing the demographics and epidemiology of P&S syphilis. Further study is required to determine the reason for these emerging trends, and prevention and control efforts to reverse the trends must include new, intensive outreach activities with the MSM community in Chicago.

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